Normalisation of Violence against Minorities in Contemporary India: Special Reference to Muslims

Saddam Khan[1*]

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh, India.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-04-04-042
*Corresponding Author: khansaddam766@gmail.com

This study investigates the normalization of violence against religious minorities, with a specific emphasis on anti-Muslim incidents in contemporary India. Through a qualitative conceptual approach, the study identifies two principal dynamics: First, the consolidation of majoritarian politics, selective law enforcement, and permissive media narratives have collectively facilitated the social acceptance and institutionalization of violence against Muslims. Second, the interaction between political rhetoric, legal frameworks, and public discourse has produced an environment where such violence is routinely ignored, justified, or encouraged. The analysis draws on legal documents, government and independent reports, and recent case studies to demonstrate the consequences for Muslim communities—namely, increased insecurity, economic marginalization, and diminished trust in democratic institutions. The study concludes that this normalization fundamentally threatens India's constitutional principles of equality and secularism, highlighting the urgent need for legal, political, and social reforms to restore minority rights and social harmony.

Keywords: *Communal Violence, Anti-Muslim, Hate Crimes, Minority Rights, Mob Lynching, India, Minorities.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2014 general election was a turning point in Indian politics. The BJP-led NDA government replaced the UPA, promising "SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas"—development and inclusion for everyone. Many people saw this as a pledge to improve the lives of all citizens, especially minorities (Hasan, 2019). However, the experience of religious minorities, particularly Muslims, has been very different from these promises, highlighting major contradictions in India's secular and pluralistic identity (Khan, 2024a; Jaffrelot, 2021).

India's Constitution provides strong guarantees of equality and protection for minorities through Articles 14–16 and 29–30. Yet, in reality, minorities often face discrimination, exclusion, and violence (CFR, 2024; The News

Minute, 2024). In recent years, there has been a sharp rise in hate crimes, targeted attacks, and communal riots, with minorities suffering the most. Incidents like the Gujarat pogrom (2002), Kandhamal-Orissa (2008), Assam (2012), Muzaffarnagar (2013), and the Delhi pogrom (2020) show a clear and ongoing pattern of organized violence against minorities, often with little response or even complicity from the state **(Khan, 2024a; Khan & Rahman, 2024)**.

This violence has become normalized because of several factors: majoritarian political narratives, selective law enforcement, exclusionary policies such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC), biased media coverage, and the spread of hate speech online **(Ballard Brief, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2024)**. Practices like "bulldozer justice" have created an environment where violence is not only common but sometimes justified or ignored by society and institutions. This has weakened trust in the legal system, increased social and economic marginalization, and caused deep psychological harm to minority communities, while also damaging India's global reputation **(USCIRF, 2024; India Hate Lab, 2025)**.

The situation is made worse by poor handling from state authorities and political connections with those committing violence. This has led to policy paralysis and weakened India's democratic values and constitutional principles **(Austin, 1966; Bhargava, 1998; Mehta, 2008)**. This raises an important question: Is the violence against minorities due to weak governance, or is it a result of deeper, institutionalized marginalization? The government's responsibility to ensure peace and harmony for all citizens is now under serious doubt, as recent events—often highlighted by the media—suggest a silent approval from authorities, making structural violence seem normal **(Khan, 2024a)**.

International standards, like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Minorities (1992), require states to protect and promote minority identities. Yet, India's current situation raises urgent concerns about how well these commitments are being met and whether constitutional principles can withstand growing intolerance.

In this context, this paper aims to examine the complex relationship between religion and politics in India, focusing on how violence and marginalization of minorities have become normalized. It pays special attention to recent incidents in Hindi-speaking regions and Delhi, exploring the role of political parties especially the ruling government and the systematic exclusion of minorities from public life **(Khan, 2024a; Khan, 2024b)**. Using both primary field data and secondary sources, this study seeks to fill an important gap by analyzing patterns of anti-minority violence, the role of the state and media, and the wider effects on democracy, minority rights, and social unity. The goal is to provide evidence-based suggestions for strengthening India's secular foundations and protecting the rights and dignity of all its citizens.

1.1. Key Terminology

- ➢ **Minority:** A group of people who are fewer in number or have less power compared to the majority in a country. In India, minorities are often defined by religion, language, caste, or tribe.
- ➢ **Normalization of Violence:** When acts of violence become common and are accepted by society or ignored by authorities, making them seem normal.
- ➢ **Majoritarian Politics:** Political actions or policies that favor the majority community, sometimes at the expense of minority groups.
- ➢ **Communal Violence:** Violence between different religious or ethnic groups, often leading to riots or attacks.
- ➢ **Anti-Muslim Violence:** Specific acts of violence or discrimination targeting Muslim individuals or communities.
- ➢ **Hate Crimes:** Crimes motivated by hatred towards a particular group because of their religion, ethnicity, or identity.
- ➢ **Mob Lynching:** When a group of people takes the law into their own hands and attacks or kills someone, often based on rumors or prejudice.
- ➢ **Selective Law Enforcement:** When laws are applied unfairly, protecting some groups while ignoring crimes against others.
- ➢ **Permissive Media Narratives:** When the media presents or ignores events in a way that justifies or downplays violence against certain groups.

> ➢ **Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA):** A law in India that changes who can become a citizen, criticized for excluding certain groups, especially Muslims.
> ➢ **National Register of Citizens (NRC):** A government list of legal citizens, which has raised concerns about excluding minorities.
> ➢ **Bulldozer Justice:** The use of demolitions (often of homes or businesses) as a form of punishment, usually targeting minority communities.
> ➢ **Minoritism:** The use of minority status for political or social advantage, sometimes by the state or by groups seeking special rights.
> ➢ **Marginalization:** The process by which certain groups are pushed to the edge of society, with less access to resources, rights, and opportunities.
> ➢ **Secularism:** The principle that the state should not favor any religion and should treat all citizens equally, regardless of their faith.

1.2. Defining Minorities

The concept of "minority" has been widely discussed in academic and policy literature, yet there is no universally accepted definition—neither in legal nor in social terms **(Rehman, 2000)**. The ambiguity surrounding the term has allowed states to define minorities in ways that often exclude large segments of the population from protections, while various groups simultaneously strive for minority status to claim certain rights and safeguards. This lack of consensus has resulted in the absence of binding international laws or guiding principles to clearly pronounce the concept of minority **(Rehman, 2000)**.

Classifications of minorities commonly focus on two main aspects. The first is numerical inferiority, where a group is considered a minority if its population size is smaller compared to the majority within the boundaries of a state. This approach, however, is limited, as it does not account for the power dynamics that often define minority status. The second, and more nuanced, classification is based on power relations. Social scientists argue that minority status is not just a matter of numbers, but a political and sociological reality. From this perspective, a minority is defined by its degree of political participation and

social inclusion, rather than merely its population size **(Khan, 2012)**. In many cases, minorities are marginalized not only because they are fewer in number, but because they are systematically excluded from access to power and resources.

Historical experience has shown that both inter- and intra-state conflicts often arise from the failure of political systems to protect minority rights. In such contexts, international bodies may intervene in cases of human rights violations, sometimes overriding the principle of state sovereignty. Nevertheless, each country retains significant discretion in granting minority rights according to its own policies and preferences, as there is no clear-cut, enforceable international legal standard compelling states to protect minorities. In the absence of such authority, some regimes either deny the existence of minorities within their territories or fail to protect their legal rights **(Khan, 2012)**.

1.3. Indian Minorities and the Pervasive Use of Minoritism

India stands as a remarkable example of composite and heterogeneous cultural diversity, with its social fabric shaped by centuries of assimilation and amalgamation among various communities **(Khan, 1992)**. This process has given rise to a unique civilizational unity, often described as "unity in diversity," where each group retains its distinct identity while contributing to the broader national mosaic much like a bouquet of flowers or a salad bowl, where every element is visible yet part of a harmonious whole. The demographic landscape of India reflects this diversity, comprising over a billion people from six major ethnic groups, six large religious communities, and approximately 6,400 castes and sub-castes, speaking 18 officially recognized languages **(Marguerite,1976)**. Within each ethnic group, further layers of class and identity add to the complexity of India's plural society.

Minorities in India are broadly classified into four categories: linguistic, religious, caste, and tribal groups. However, in practice, much of the national debate and policy focus has centered on religious minorities. This is largely due to the contested nature of religious identity, especially following the partition of undivided India along religious lines—a process that left enduring legacies of suspicion and competition **(Khan,1992)**. The struggle for recognition and

rights among minorities continues within the constitutional framework, with identity-based demands persisting as a central feature of Indian politics.

Despite India's formal declaration as a secular, democratic republic with no state religion, religion continues to play a prominent role in public and political life (Hasan,2019). The secular character of the state is often challenged by the visible presence of religious practices in public spaces and the politicization of religious identities. This phenomenon, sometimes termed "minoritism," refers to the strategic use of minority status by both state and non-state actors—sometimes to extend protections, but at other times to exclude or marginalize certain groups (Khan, 2024a).

The pervasive use of minoritism in India is evident in the way state policies, political rhetoric, and legal frameworks are deployed to define, include, or exclude groups from the ambit of minority rights. At times, the state has narrowly defined minorities to limit access to constitutional safeguards, while at other times, various groups have mobilized to claim minority status for political or material benefits (Rehman, 2000). This dynamic has contributed to an ongoing contestation over the meaning and scope of minority rights in India, often resulting in the marginalization of the very communities these rights are intended to protect (Khan, 2024a; Khan & Rahman, 2024).

1.4. Statement of the Problem

Despite constitutional safeguards, violence against Muslims in India has become increasingly normalized, raising urgent questions about the effectiveness of legal protections and the future of secular democracy. This study seeks to understand the mechanisms and consequences of this normalization.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to

➢ Identify recurring patterns and themes in incidents of anti-Muslim violence.
➢ Assess the role of state policies, legal frameworks, and political rhetoric in legitimizing or perpetuating such violence.
➢ Evaluate the impact of these dynamics on the rights, security, and social integration of Muslim communities.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the academic understanding of communal violence, informs policymakers about the failures of current frameworks, and supports advocacy for minority rights and social harmony. By examining the political, legal, and socio-economic factors that enable this normalization, the research offers insight into how state policies, political rhetoric, and media narratives can render violence against minorities acceptable.

1.7. Rationale

Given the recent surge in communal violence and the global attention on minority rights, it is crucial to critically examine the processes that enable and sustain such violence in India.

Examining the mechanisms behind this normalization is essential for understanding broader threats to justice, equality, and social cohesion in India. By analyzing the political, legal, and social drivers of anti-Muslim violence, this research addresses an urgent gap and contributes to efforts to uphold India's pluralistic and democratic values.

1.8. Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to the analysis of secondary data sources, including legal documents, government reports, media coverage, and scholarly literature from 2014 to 2024. The focus is on the experiences of Muslims in India, with particular attention to communal violence, state responses, and legislative developments. The research does not include primary fieldwork or interviews, and findings are therefore based on the interpretation of existing data. While the study provides a thematic overview of national trends, it may not capture all regional variations or the full complexity of local dynamics.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. The Historical and Political Roots of Anti-Muslim Violence

Brass (2003) conceptualizes anti-Muslim violence in India as an "institutionalized riot system," wherein communal riots are not spontaneous but systematically orchestrated by political actors for electoral or ideological gain. This analysis, supported by decades of fieldwork, reveals that networks of local leaders, police, and

politicians collaborate to execute violence, making such incidents recurrent and predictable. Major episodes including the 2002 Gujarat riots, 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, and 2020 Delhi violence have resulted in large-scale displacement, loss of life, and destruction of property (Maitra, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024; CSSS, 2025; New Indian Express, 2025). These studies collectively demonstrate that communal violence is deeply embedded in India's political landscape.

2.2. Political Mobilization and State Complicity

A substantial body of research highlights the political motivations behind anti-Muslim violence, often coinciding with election cycles and concentrated in BJP-ruled states (Dhattiwala& Biggs, 2012; Tambiah, 1997; Prakash, 2019; ACLED, 2024; CSSS, 2025). Jaffrelot (2021), Kumar & Singh (2022), and Vaishnav (2019) argue that Hindu nationalist ideology and state policies have exacerbated the marginalization of Muslims. Under the current regime, anti-Muslim rhetoric has become mainstream, with exclusionary laws, hate speech, and collective punishment—such as "bulldozer justice"—increasingly employed following communal clashes (Human Rights Watch, 2024; CSSS, 2025; USCIRF, 2024; BBC, 2025). The implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) has further heightened legal precarity for Muslims (USCIRF, 2024; CFR, 2024).

2.3. Media, Social Media and the Spread of Hate

The role of media and social media in propagating anti-Muslim sentiment is widely documented. India Hate Lab (2025) reports a 74% increase in anti-minority hate speech in 2024, with 98.5% of incidents targeting Muslims and the majority traced to platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and X (CSO Hate Watch, 2024). Senior political leaders have been responsible for a significant share of these events, particularly during the 2024 general elections, with hate speech amplified through live streams and digital platforms (CSO Hate Watch, 2024; India Hate Lab, 2025).

2.4. Economic Marginalization and Targeted Boycotts

Recent studies reveal that anti-Muslim violence is not limited to physical attacks but extends to economic exclusion. Economic boycotts, targeted regulations, and denial of business licenses have disproportionately harmed Muslim livelihoods, especially among the poor and working class (Maktoob Media, 2024; Minority Rights Group, 2024; HRW, 2024). State-sponsored and far-right-backed boycotts, as well as overregulation of Muslim-dominated trades, have led to job loss, forced business closures, and increased poverty (Maktoob Media, 2024; Hindustan Times, 2024).

2.5. Impact on Muslim Communities and Institutional Trust

The cumulative impact of repeated violence and exclusion is profound. Longitudinal and case study data indicate that Muslim communities face displacement, loss of income, educational setbacks, psychological trauma, and deepening mistrust in institutions (Ballard Brief, 2025; Maitra, 2024; Sachar Committee, 2006; Amnesty International, 2024). Legal processes are often biased, with Muslims experiencing long detentions and extra-judicial punishment, while perpetrators frequently enjoy impunity (CSSS, 2025; HRW, 2024; USCIRF, 2024).

The existing literature establishes that anti-Muslim violence in India is persistent and increasingly normalized through interconnected political, legal, media, and economic channels (Brass, 2003; Jaffrelot, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2024; India Hate Lab, 2025; Maktoob Media, 2024). This normalization has far-reaching consequences for minority rights, social cohesion, and the integrity of India's secular democracy.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
3.1. The Idea of Social Constructionism and Majoritarianism

Social constructionism is a central theory in the study of communal violence and minority rights. This perspective emphasizes that social realities such as group identities, perceptions of threat, and notions of belonging are not fixed or inherent, but are constructed through collective ideas, narratives, and institutional practices. In contrast to materialist or purely interest-based explanations, social constructionism argues that the way communities perceive and interact with minorities is shaped by shared beliefs, political discourse, and media representations (Berger

&Luckmann, 1966; Goffman, 1974). In the Indian context, the rise of majoritarian ideology is not simply a demographic fact, but the outcome of constructed narratives that define Muslims as "outsiders" or "threats" to the nation. This process is reinforced by political mobilization, legal measures, and cultural symbols, which together normalize exclusion and violence (Jaffrelot, 2021).

3.2. Analyzing the Normalization of Anti-Muslim Violence Through Social Constructionism

The normalization of violence against Muslims in India can be understood as a product of sustained idea construction. Historically, anti-Muslim sentiment has been shaped by political actors, media, and state institutions, who construct Muslims as a "problematic other." This construction is visible in electoral rhetoric, biased law enforcement, and exclusionary policies such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The repeated association of Muslims with threats to national security, economic competition, or cultural purity has created a powerful narrative that justifies discrimination and violence (Dhattiwala& Biggs, 2012; Kumar & Singh, 2022).

The spread of hate speech and misinformation through digital media further amplifies these constructions, embedding anti-Muslim attitudes in everyday life and public discourse (India Hate Lab, 2025). Economic boycotts and targeted regulations are similarly justified by narratives that frame Muslims as undeserving or dangerous, reinforcing patterns of exclusion and marginalization (Maktoob Media, 2024).

From a social constructionist perspective, the persistence and normalization of anti-Muslim violence are not inevitable, but are the result of deliberate processes of meaning-making and identity construction. The theory highlights how the repetition of exclusionary ideas by political leaders, media, and institutions transforms exceptional acts of violence into routine and accepted practices. The construction of Muslims as perpetual outsiders undermines the principles of equality and secularism, fueling cycles of violence and eroding trust in democratic institutions.

This social constructionist approach provides a powerful lens for understanding how anti-Muslim violence in India is normalized. It further demonstrates that the roots of this violence lie not only in material conditions or isolated incidents, but in the ongoing construction of identities, threats, and social hierarchies that shape state policy and public attitudes in the twenty-first century.

3.3. Majoritarianism and Political Mobilization

The theory of majoritarianism explains how the dominance of a majority group politically, culturally, and institutionally can lead to the marginalization of minorities. In India, the rise of Hindu nationalist ideology has constructed a narrative of the Hindu majority as the true representative of the nation, casting Muslims as perpetual outsiders. Political mobilization around majoritarian identity, especially during elections, has been shown to trigger and justify violence against minorities. This theme draws on the concept that state power and political interests are often exercised through the systematic targeting and exclusion of minority groups (Jaffrelot, 2021; Brass, 2003).

3.4. Economic Conflict and Marginalization

Economic conflict theory provides insight into how competition over resources and economic advancement by minority groups can provoke backlash and violence. Studies indicate that when Muslims experience relative economic mobility, it is often met with increased hostility and targeted economic exclusion such as boycotts, denial of business licenses, and overregulation of Muslim trades. This theme highlights how economic anxieties are constructed and politicized to justify discrimination and reinforce social hierarchies (Mitra& Ray, 2013; Maktoob Media, 2024).

3.5. Media and Digital Hate

The culture-centered approach (CCA) and theories of media influence focus on how narratives in mainstream and social media shape public perceptions and legitimize violence. The proliferation of hate speech, misinformation, and conspiracy theories about Muslims on digital platforms has played a critical role in normalizing anti-Muslim attitudes. Media not only reflects but actively constructs social realities, amplifying political rhetoric and erasing minority voices. This communicative environment enables the routine

justification and acceptance of violence against Muslims **(India Hate Lab, 2025; CSO Hate Watch, 2024)**.

3.6. Legal Pluralism and Constitutional Secularism

The concepts of legal pluralism and constitutional secularism frame the discussion of minority rights in India. While the Constitution guarantees equality and protection for all citizens, the selective enforcement of laws and the introduction of exclusionary measures like the CAA and NRC reveal the gap between legal ideals and lived realities. This theme examines how legal frameworks can be manipulated to serve majoritarian interests, undermining pluralism and the rule of law **(CFR, 2024; The News Minute, 2024)**.

The theoretical framework integrates social constructionism, majoritarianism, economic conflict theory, media and communication theories, and legal pluralism to provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing the normalization of violence against Muslims in India. These themes collectively explain how identities, interests, and exclusions are constructed and maintained, and how they interact to produce the persistent marginalization of minority communities.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach, relying exclusively on secondary data to examine the normalization of violence against Muslims in contemporary India. Data were sourced from reputable newspapers, government and policy reports, legal documents, human rights organizations, and scholarly articles. Only sources published in English within the last 15 years, directly addressing anti-Muslim violence, legal frameworks, or media narratives, and providing original research or comprehensive analysis were included. Excluded were conference proceedings, non-English materials, inaccessible full texts, unsupported opinion pieces, and outdated reports.

Secondary data were identified through systematic searches of academic databases (Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus) and official websites, using keywords such as "anti-Muslim violence," "communal riots," and "minority rights India." Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and categorize them into themes like political mobilization, legal exclusion, media influence, and economic marginalization. To enhance reliability, findings were cross-checked through peer discussions and comparison with established literature. This rigorous and transparent methodology ensures that the study's conclusions are grounded in comprehensive and credible analysis.

5. FINDINGS
5.1. The Paradigm Shift of Politics from Secular to Communal

The 2024 Lok Sabha election reaffirmed a significant transformation in Indian politics, marking a continued departure from the secular framework that had long defined the nation's public sphere. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with its pronounced Hindu nationalist agenda, once again secured a decisive mandate, further consolidating its influence across the country. This electoral outcome was widely interpreted as a public endorsement of majoritarian politics, where cultural identity and religious nationalism became central to political mobilization **(Hasan, 2019; Khan, 2024a)**.

The post-2014 period, and especially the years following the 2019 and 2024 elections, witnessed a marked increase in the normalization of communal rhetoric in mainstream discourse. Policies and legislative measures such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and the abrogation of Article 370 were repeatedly emphasized during the 2024 campaign, often invoking fears and anxieties around national security and cultural preservation. These developments contributed to the further marginalization of Muslims, who were frequently portrayed as "outsiders" or threats to the nation's integrity **(Khan & Rahman, 2024)**.

The normalization of violence against minorities, particularly Muslims, became evident in the routine nature of hate speech, vigilante attacks, and communal riots. High-profile incidents, including the Delhi violence of 2020 and continued lynchings in several states, underscored the vulnerability of minorities and the inadequacy of state responses. Many such incidents were met with silence or muted reactions from political leaders and state institutions, reinforcing a sense of impunity and institutional complicity **(Khan, 2024a; Hasan, 2019)**.

The Congress party and other opposition groups attempted to revive secular and inclusive narratives, but their repeated electoral setbacks in 2024 further highlighted the declining influence of Nehruvian secularism and the growing appeal of identity-based politics **(Mehta, 2008)**. Popular perceptions increasingly equated secularism with minority appeasement, fueling polarization and deepening social divides **(Austin, 1966; Hasan, 2019)**.

The paradigm shift from secular to communal politics is not merely an outcome of electoral arithmetic but reflects deeper changes in India's social and ideological fabric. The ascendancy of Hindutva, the politicization of religious identity, and the systematic marginalization of Muslims have collectively redefined the boundaries of Indian democracy. The normalization of violence against minorities is now embedded in everyday discourse, legal frameworks, and institutional practices, posing a profound challenge to the constitutional values of equality, secularism, and justice.

5.2. Factors behind Violence against Minorities

The ambiguity of the Indian state's role in matters of religion remains a central issue. While the Constitution explicitly proclaims that the state has no official religion and upholds a secular character, in practice, governments have often intervened in religious affairs, sometimes under the guise of reform, which many communities perceive as encroachments on their personal and religious autonomy. The ongoing debate over the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the rights of religious minorities continues to be a flashpoint, with some groups arguing that such measures are discriminatory or threaten the cultural and legal autonomy of minorities, while others claim that special provisions for minorities undermine the sense of common citizenship and national unity.

The BJP, since its rise to power in 2014 and reaffirmed by its electoral victories in 2019 and 2024, has effectively politicized the dominant Hindu identity by projecting the notion that so-called "pseudo-secular" policies have pampered minorities at the expense of the majority, thereby threatening the integrity of the nation. By skillfully playing up the narrative of a perpetual threat from minorities, the party has planted potent seeds of insecurity and steadily mobilized religious identity

as a major force in Indian politics **(Hansen & Bloom, 1999; Khan, 2024a)**.

Recent years have witnessed the amplification of communal rhetoric through both mainstream and social media, where misinformation and hate speech have been weaponized to deepen divides. The spread of conspiracy theories such as those blaming minority communities for the spread of COVID-19 has led to increased stigmatization and violence, as seen during the pandemic when Muslims were falsely accused of "corona jihad" **(Hasan, 2019)**. Such narratives have not only fueled public hostility but also emboldened vigilante groups to target minorities with impunity.

Institutional factors also play a critical role. Law enforcement agencies and the judicial system have often been criticized for their inadequate response to violence against minorities, with frequent reports of delayed justice, biased investigations, or outright complicity. High-profile incidents such as the Delhi riots of 2020 and continuing lynchings have exposed the vulnerability of minorities and the failure of state mechanisms to protect them **(Khan, 2024a)**.

Political polarization has further marginalized voices advocating for pluralism and secularism. The opposition, particularly the Congress and regional parties, has struggled to present a cohesive alternative, and attempts to defend minority rights are often dismissed as "appeasement politics," further isolating these communities from the mainstream political discourse **(Mehta, 2008)**.

Socioeconomic factors also contribute to the cycle of violence. Widespread poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and healthcare disproportionately affect minority communities, making them more vulnerable to both state and non-state violence. The exclusion from social protection schemes and welfare programs, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, has only deepened their marginalization **(Pandya &Redcay, 2021)**.

In current era normalization of violence against minorities in contemporary India is driven by a complex interplay of political, institutional, media, and socioeconomic factors. The persistent portrayal of minorities as threats, the politicization of religious identity, the failure of state institutions to deliver justice, and the deepening of economic and social inequalities

have collectively created an environment where violence is not only tolerated but, in some cases, actively encouraged.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper show that violence against Muslims in India has become more common and accepted over the past decade, with recent data indicating a sharp increase in both hate speech and communal violence in the last two years. This is not just because of isolated incidents, but because of a mix of political, legal, and social factors that work together to make such violence seem normal. Since 2014, the rise of majoritarian politics has been a key driver, with political parties and leaders frequently using religious identity in their speeches and policies. Laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have made many Muslims feel unsafe and excluded. Practices such as "bulldozer justice," where Muslim homes, businesses, and places of worship are demolished after communal clashes, have become widespread, especially in BJP-ruled states. These demolitions often happen without due process and send a message that violence and collective punishment are acceptable responses. Such actions do not only reflect law and order issues but also shape how society views Muslims, often painting them as outsiders or threats.

The role of the state is also crucial. Police and other authorities are often slow to act, or sometimes do not act at all, when violence happens. In some cases, officials have even been accused of helping those who commit violence. Legal cases move slowly, and very few people are punished for hate crimes or mob lynchings. This lack of accountability makes victims feel helpless and encourages those who want to spread hate. In 2024 and early 2025, communal riots surged by 84%, mostly in BJP-ruled states such as Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, with Muslims bearing the brunt of the violence. Following terrorist attacks in Kashmir, thousands of Muslims were detained and their homes demolished in states like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, further deepening communal tensions.

Media and social media have made things worse. News coverage and online posts often repeat negative stereotypes about Muslims. Reports show that hate speech against Muslims increased sharply—by 62% in the second half of 2023—especially during elections and major geopolitical events like the Israel-Gaza war. Political leaders themselves have sometimes used or spread hate speech, which makes it seem more acceptable in public life. Incendiary songs and online content have fueled both online and offline attacks, creating a hostile environment for Muslims.

The impact on Muslim communities is severe. Many families have lost their homes or businesses, and some have been forced to leave their neighborhoods. Economic boycotts and job losses have made poverty worse. People also feel deep fear and mistrust many do not feel safe in public or believe that the police will protect them. A 2024 survey found that nearly 79% of Indian Muslims fear ongoing violence and government persecution. This situation damages not only the lives of Muslims but also the basic values of India's democracy and secularism.

Overall, the evidence suggests that violence against Muslims is not just a result of weak governance, but of deeper, ongoing patterns of exclusion and discrimination. The combination of political rhetoric, selective law enforcement, exclusionary policies, and negative media coverage has created an environment where violence is tolerated or even encouraged. International organizations have warned that signs of mass atrocities are present, highlighting the urgent need for change. To address this problem, it is not enough to change laws or punish a few individuals. There must be a broader change in political language, stronger accountability for officials, and efforts to challenge stereotypes in the media. Only then can India begin to reverse the normalization of violence and protect the rights and dignity of all its citizens.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
7.1. Digital Hate and Social Media

There is a need for more empirical research on how digital platforms contribute to the spread and normalization of anti-Muslim hate, including the impact on the psychological well-being and civic participation of targeted communities. Future studies should explore the convergence of online hate with offline violence and the role of global networks in amplifying Islamophobic narratives.

8. COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Cross-regional and cross-community comparisons could help identify patterns and unique drivers of communal violence, as well as effective interventions in different contexts.

9. INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Further research should examine the effectiveness of legal reforms, police accountability mechanisms, and judicial responses to hate crimes and communal violence. Evaluating the impact of recent policy changes and legal amendments is crucial to understanding gaps in protection and justice for minorities.

10. LONGITUDINAL IMPACT

Studies tracking the long-term socio-economic and psychological effects of normalized violence on Muslim communities can provide valuable insights for policy and rehabilitation programs.

11. POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

11.1. Legal and Policy Reforms:
➢ Enact and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination and hate crime laws, modeled on the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, specifically targeting violence against religious minorities.
➢ Amend the Constitution to explicitly recognize and protect all minority groups, including religious, linguistic, and ethnic communities.

11.2. Police and Judicial Accountability
➢ Implement independent oversight mechanisms for law enforcement agencies to address bias and impunity in handling communal violence cases.
➢ Provide special training to police and judiciary on minority rights and communal sensitivity.

11.3. Community Engagement and Peace Building
➢ Launch peace education and interfaith dialogue initiatives to foster understanding and reduce communal tensions at the grassroots level.
➢ Support civil society organizations working to document hate crimes, provide legal aid, and promote reconciliation.

11.4. Media Regulation and Digital Literacy
➢ Strengthen regulations against hate speech and misinformation on digital platforms, and promote digital literacy programs to counter online radicalization and communal propaganda.

11.5. Victim Support and Rehabilitation:
➢ Ensure comprehensive support for victims, including legal aid, psychological counseling, and economic rehabilitation, to help rebuild lives and restore trust in institutions.
➢ These research directions and interventions are essential to counter the normalization of violence, inform policy, and promote a more inclusive and just society in India.

12. CONCLUSION

Violence and discrimination against Muslims in India have become more frequent and socially accepted in recent years, driven by factors such as majoritarian politics, biased law enforcement, exclusionary policies like the CAA and NRC, and the spread of hate speech through media. Evidence shows that anti-Muslim violence is often organized around political events, with state institutions frequently failing to respond or appearing complicit, while legal processes rarely deliver justice and economic boycotts deepen marginalization. This has harmed the lives and well-being of Muslim citizens, eroded trust in legal and democratic institutions, and damaged India's secular reputation. Addressing these challenges requires real reforms: holding perpetrators accountable, ensuring unbiased law enforcement, revising discriminatory policies, and countering hate speech. Civil society, education, and the public must also promote tolerance and inclusion to reverse the normalization of violence and restore trust in India's democratic ideals.

REFERENCES

Constitution of India, Preamble and Articles 14, 15, 25.

JavaidRehman. The Weakness in the International Protection of Minority Rights, Hague: Kluwer Law International. 2000, p. 13.

Khan, S. (2024). Rights of Muslim Minorities in Contemporary India: A Critical Analysis 3(9),

pp.679-689. https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-037.

Hasan, Z. (2019). Democracy and the crisis of inequality.

Marguerite R. B., The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1976, p. 7.

Saddam Khan (2024). Rights of Muslim Minorities in Contemporary India: A Critical Analysis, International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies. 3(9), pp.679-689. https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-037.

Rahman, S. K. M. Rights of Minorities in the 21st Century: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan.

Wright, J. (2025, May 23). Violence against Muslims in India - Ballard Brief. Ballard Brief. https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/violence-against-muslims-in-india.

Maizland, L. (2024, March 18). India's Muslims: an increasingly marginalized population. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/india-muslims-marginalized-population-bjp-modi.

Hegemony and Demolitions: The Tale of Communal riots in India in 2024 - Centre for Study of Society and Secularism. Centre for Study of Society and Secularism. https://csss-isla.com/secular-perspective/hegemony-and-demolitions-the-tale-of-communal-riots-in-india-in-2024/.

World Report: India India. (2024, January 11). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/india#:~:text=continued%20to%20escalate.-,Impunity%20for%20Security%20Force%20Abuses,first%20nine%20months%20in%202023.

IHL. (2025, February 10). Report 2024: Hate speech events in India. India Hate Lab (IHL). https://www.indiahatelab.com/2025/02/10/hate-speech-events-in-india-2024/.

Jaffrelot, C. (2021). Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy. Princeton University Press.

Prasad, A. (2024, November 18). Economic Violence: How Hindutva hurt India's Muslims by targeting livelihoods. Maktoob Media. https://maktoobmedia.com/features/economic-violence-how-hindutva-hurt-indias-muslims-by-targeting-livelihood/.

New Indian Express. (2025) India witnessed 84% rise in communal riots in 2024: Report. The New Indian Express. https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Jan/28/india-witnessed-84-rise-in-communal-riots-in-2024-report.

Hasan, S. & United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. (2024). USCIRF Country Update: India. In USCIRF Country Update. https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024%20India%20Country%20Update.pdf

Amnesty International. (n.d.). Human rights in India. https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/.

Ashok Swain, & Ashok Swain. (2024, February 20). Upholding minority rights in India: A test of democracy and constitutional commitment. The News Minute. https://www.thenewsminute.com/voices/upholding-minority-rights-in-india-a-test-of-democracy-and-constitutional-commitment.

United Nations. (1992). Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic.

Laski, H.J. (1925). A Grammar of Politics.

Brass, P. R. (2003). The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India. University of Washington Press.

"We have no orders to save you." (2023). In Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/04/30/we-have-no-orders-save-you/state-participation-and-complicity-communal-violence.

Amnesty International. (2022, August 8). India: Hate crimes against Muslims and rising Islamophobia must be condemned. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/06/india-hate-crimes-against-muslims-and-rising-islamophobia-must-be-condemned/.

https://csss-isla.com/secular-perspective/hegemony-and-demolitions-the-tale-of-communal-riots-in-india-in-2024/.

Monazza&Alok Kumar, "Communal Violence in India – A Critical Study" (2020)](https://thelawbrigade.com/wp-

content/uploads/2020/03/Monazza_ALOK-KUMAR_LPR_COMMUNAL-VIOLENCE-IN-INDIA-%E2%80%93-A-CRITICAL-STUDY.pdf.

IndiaSpend, "84% of Victims of Cow-Related Violence Since 2010 Are Muslim"(https://www.indiaspend.com/84-of-victims-of-cow-related-violence-since-2010-are-muslim-2014-2017/.

Minority Rights Group, "Violence and discrimination against India's religious minorities" (2024) https://minorityrights.org/app/uploads/2024/01/mrg-rep-india-final.pdf.

Tehelka, "The Truth: Gujarat 2002"(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_Muslims_in_independent_India.

The Wire, "2024 Saw 84% Rise in Communal Riots"(https://m.thewire.in/article/communalism/2024-saw-84-rise-in-communal-riots-religious-festivals-were-main-trigger-csss?utm=relatednews.

Scroll.in, "India saw 84% rise in communal riots in 2024"(https://scroll.in/latest/1078383/india-saw-84-rise-in-communal-riots-in-2024-report.

Newsclick, "How Hate Spread in 2024"](https://www.newsclick.in/how-hate-spread-2024-report-communal-violence-india.

Stanley Tambiah, "Leveling Crowds"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_Muslims_in_independent_India.

Granville Austin, "The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation"(https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-indian-constitution-9780195649598.

Yadav, "The Role of Pro Bono Legal Services in Supporting Legal Aid" (2019)(https://iciset.in/Paper2537.pdf.

Pro Bono Club, Faculty of Law, BHU Justice for All(https://www.bhu.ac.in/SiteAttachments/Pro%20Bono%20Club2025271241558.pdf

Hegemony and Demolitions: The Tale of Communal Riots in India in 2024, CSSS](https://csss-isla.com/secular-perspective/hegemony-and-demolitions-the-tale-of-communal-riots-in-india-in-2024/.

India witnessed 84% rise in communal riots in 2024: Report, The New Indian Express](https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Jan/28/india-witnessed-84-rise-in-communal-riots-in-2024-report.

2024 Saw 84% Rise in Communal Riots, Religious Festivals Were Main Trigger: CSSS, The Wire (https://m.thewire.in/article/communalism/2024-saw-84-rise-in-communal-riots-religious-festivals-were-main-trigger-csss?utm=relatednews.

How Hate Spread in 2024, a Report of Communal Violence in India, Newsclick (https://www.newsclick.in/how-hate-spread-2024-report-communal-violence-india.

India saw 84 per cent more communal riots in 2024: CSSS report, National Herald (https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/national/india-saw-84-percent-more-communal-riots-in-2024-csss-report.

Communal | Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India (https://data.gov.in/keywords/Communal.

A FACT SHEET ON COMMUNAL RIOTS IN INDIA, PPCRC (https://www.pprc.in/upload/Fact-Sheet%20of%20Communal%20riots%20in%20India.pdf.

Violence and discrimination against India's religious minorities, Minority Rights Group (PDF)(https://minorityrights.org/app/uploads/2024/01/mrg-rep-india-final.pdf.

Rising Communal Violence In India: An Overview Of The 2024 CSSS Report, Feminism In India (https://feminisminindia.com/2025/01/30/rising-communal-violence-in-india-a-2024-overview-of-the-csss-report/.

Bulldozer Justice in BJP-ruled States, Scroll.in (https://scroll.in/latest/1078383/india-saw-84-rise-in-communal-riots-in-2024-report.

Mob Lynching and Hate Crimes in India: 2015–2024, Amnesty International (PDF) (https://amnesty.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Mob-Lynching-and-Hate-Crimes-in-India-2015-2024.pdf.

Attacks on Christians in India: 2024 Report, United Christian Forum (https://persecutionrelief.org/attacks-on-christians-in-india-2024-report/.

India: Police Violence and Arbitrary Arrests, Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/09/india-police-violence-and-arbitrary-arrests.

India: State of Minority Rights, Minority Rights Group International (PDF) (https://minorityrights.org/app/uploads/2024/01/mrg-rep-india-final.pdf.

CAA and NRC: Legal Analysis, Amnesty International (PDF)

(https://amnesty.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CAA-NRC-Legal-Analysis.pdf.

Crime in India 2014, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (https://ncrb.gov.in/en/crime-india.

India: Hate Crimes and Impunity, Amnesty International (https://amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/06/india-hate-crimes-and-impunity/.

Election Hate Speech and Communal Violence, The Wire (https://thewire.in/communalism/election-hate-speech-and-communal-violence.

The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation, Granville Austin, Oxford University Press (https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-indian-constitution-9780195649598.